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OPOSSUNOQUONUSKE  
(D. 1610)  
CHESTERFIELD COUNTY  
APPAMATTUCK LEADER

Opossunoquonuske, chief of an Appamattuck Indian town near the mouth of the Appomattox River, was one of the first Indian leaders the English explorers met in 1607.



2

MARY WILLING BYRD  
(1740–1814)  
CHARLES CITY COUNTY, PLANTER

Mary Willing Byrd preserved her children's property during the American Revolution and eloquently defended herself against charges of loyalism.

3

MARY JEFFERY GALT  
(1844–1922)  
NORFOLK, PRESERVATIONIST

Mary Jeffery Galt helped found the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.



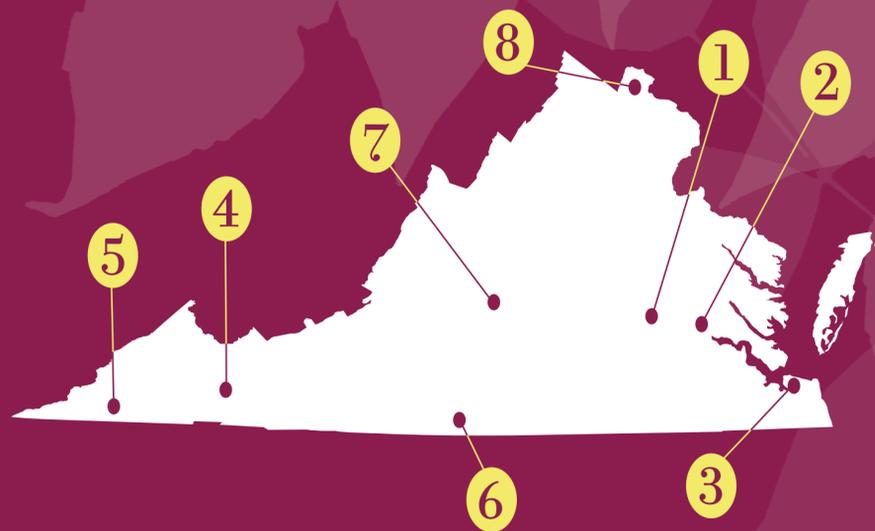
4

LAURA LU SCHERER COPENHAVER  
(1868–1940)  
SMYTH COUNTY, ENTREPRENEUR  
AND LUTHERAN LAY LEADER

As founder of Rosemont Industries and as a Lutheran lay leader, Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver advocated strategies for improving educational and economic opportunities in southwestern Virginia.



# VIRGINIA women<sup>in</sup> HISTORY 2007



5

MAYBELLE ADDINGTON CARTER  
(1909–1978)  
SCOTT COUNTY, MUSICIAN

A founding member of the Carter Family, a highly influential early country music group, Maybelle Addington Carter was a pioneering guitarist and performer.



6

CAMILLA ELLA WILLIAMS  
(1919– )  
DANVILLE, SINGER

An acclaimed lyric soprano and the first African American to receive a contract from a major American opera company, Camilla Ella Williams was a pioneer for black artists in classical music.



7

MARY ALICE FRANKLIN HATWOOD  
FUTRELL (1940– )  
LYNCHBURG, EDUCATOR

Long recognized as one of the nation's most distinguished educators, Mary Alice Franklin Hatwood Futrell led the National Education Association from 1983 to 1989.



8

SHEILA CRUMP JOHNSON  
(1949– )  
LOUDOUN COUNTY, ENTREPRENEUR  
AND PHILANTHROPIST

A cofounder of Black Entertainment Television, Sheila Crump Johnson is a dynamic philanthropist who supports education and the arts.



## 1 OPOSSUNOQUONUSKE (D. 1610), CHESTERFIELD COUNTY, APPAMATTUCK LEADER

**Opossumoquonuske (died late in 1610)** was a sister of Coquonusum, a weroance, or chief, of the Appamattuck Indians, one of several Powhatan tribes in league with the paramount chief, Powhatan. She was the weroansqua, or chief, of one of the Appamattuck towns near the mouth of the Appomattox River. The town was populous enough to put about twenty able fighting men into the field. Captain John Smith described her as young and comely.

Opossumoquonuske was one of the first Virginia Indian leaders the English met in 1607. Englishmen called her the queen of Appamattuck. On May 26, Captain Christopher Newport visited her at what Englishmen called "Queene Apumatecs bower." She made a majestic entrance with her attendants and would "permitt none to stand or sitt neere her." Dignified and dressed more elegantly than anyone else, she wore a copper crown, and other copper jewelry adorned her ears and

encircled her neck. Her long black hair hung down to the middle of her back. Gabriel Archer intended it as a compliment when he called her "a fatt lustie manly woman." Opossumoquonuske did not flinch, as other Indian leaders did, when at her request one of Newport's men fired his gun.

The Appamattuck were wary of colonists who remained in their vicinity. In the summer of 1610 Opossumoquonuske invited several of the Englishmen to come unarmed to her town, where her men killed all but one, who escaped. In retaliation, the English burned her town and killed several people. Mortally wounded, she reportedly died in the winter. About Christmas 1611, Sir Thomas Dale raided the granaries of an Appamattuck town, killed or dispersed the people, and renamed the area Bermuda Hundred.

## 2 MARY WILLING BYRD (1740–1814), CHARLES CITY COUNTY, PLANTER

After her debt-ridden husband committed suicide in 1777, **Mary Willing Byrd (September 10, 1740–March 1814)** faced the difficult task of satisfying his creditors while preserving an inheritance for her ten children. By selling off her husband's western lands, residences in Richmond and Williamsburg, and other property, she succeeded in keeping possession of Westover, the Byrd plantation in Charles City County.

Despite strong family ties to many serving the British cause (including Benedict Arnold), Byrd attempted to remain neutral during the American Revolution and thereby preserve her property for her children. Both British and patriot forces raided Westover early in 1781. Under a flag of truce Byrd tried to recover forty-nine slaves, three horses, and two ferryboats that Arnold's British forces had seized. Her attempts led to formal charges that she was trading with the enemy.

To Governor Thomas Jefferson, Byrd defended herself eloquently against those who doubted her loyalty: "I wish well to all mankind, to America in particular. What am I but an American?" Her trial, scheduled for March 1781, never took place. In August 1781 she asked the governor for another flag of truce in order to continue her efforts to recover her property. During the final British withdrawal from the United States in 1783, Byrd appealed to the British commander to honor previous promises of restitution.

Byrd's determination successfully preserved much of her property and the legacy of one of the great families of colonial Virginia. When she prepared her will in December 1813, she was still in possession of Westover and could provide for all of her children and grandchildren. Not until after her death was Westover sold outside of the Byrd family.

## 3 MARY JEFFERY GALT (1844–1922), NORFOLK, PRESERVATIONIST

After her mother showed her an article in the *Southern Churchman* describing the poor condition of Powhatan's Chimney, a seventeenth-century ruin in Gloucester County, **Mary Jeffery Galt (September 26, 1844–June 30, 1922)** determined to act to preserve Virginia's architectural heritage. In June 1888 she met informally with Barton Myers, mayor of Norfolk, to organize a preservation society similar to the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association. With encouragement from like-minded women, Galt and Cynthia Beverley Tucker Washington Coleman, of Williamsburg, formed the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities on January 4, 1889, "to restore and preserve the ancient historic buildings and tombs in the State of Virginia." Galt became a vice president of the organization.

Galt and the APVA's Norfolk Branch, established in 1889, focused their efforts on preserving Jamestown Island, the site of the first permanent English settlement in North America. Beginning in 1894, Galt oversaw the first archaeological work at the Jamestown church, the tower of which survived, and the surrounding churchyard. These first excavations, with Galt occasionally digging with her own hands, uncovered several foundations and graves. Galt took a progressive approach that emphasized the need for extensive research and minimal interference with the historic site other than to stabilize the tower.

In 1902 Galt moved to New York City, where she lived with the children of her brother, a naval officer. She remained an honorary vice president of the APVA until her death in Newport News on June 30, 1922.

## 4 LAURA LU SCHERER COPENHAVER (1868–1940), SMYTH COUNTY, ENTREPRENEUR AND LUTHERAN LAY LEADER

A confidante and mother-in-law of the writer Sherwood Anderson, **Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver (August 29, 1868–December 18, 1940)** continued a family tradition of service to the Lutheran Church. She wrote fiction, poetry, and dozens of church pageants, many in collaboration with her younger sister, Katharine Killinger Scherer Cronk. One of Copenhaver's poems, "Heralds of Christ," became a well-known hymn. Her advocacy inspired the Women's Missionary Society to establish the Konnarock Training School to provide elementary-level academic and religious education for Smyth County children who did not have access to other public schools.

As director of information for the Marion-based Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, Copenhaver advanced strategies for developing southwestern Virginia's agricultural economy. She emphasized the importance of cooperative marketing of farm products in order to improve the standard of living for farm families.

Copenhaver practiced such cooperative strategies herself by coordinating the production of textiles out of her home, Rosemont. She hired women to produce coverlets based on traditional patterns and using local wool. Rosemont Industries expanded its offerings to include a wide variety of rugs, bed canopies and fringes, and other household items, some woven, knitted, or crocheted by hand and others manufactured by machine. Rosemont's popular textiles attracted customers from throughout the United States and from Asia, Europe, and South America.

After Copenhaver's death, her sister Minerva May Scherer, longtime dean of Marion College, headed Rosemont Industries for two decades. In 1960 some of Copenhaver's children incorporated the business as Laura Copenhaver Industries, Inc., which continues to manufacture traditional textiles.

## 5 MAYBELLE ADDINGTON CARTER (1909–1978), SCOTT COUNTY, MUSICIAN

Born in the Copper Creek community in Scott County, **Maybelle Addington Carter (May 10, 1909–October 23, 1978)** learned to play the banjo, guitar, and autoharp. She was an original member of the Carter Family, a trio that included her brother-in-law, Alvin Pleasant Delaney Carter, and her first cousin, Sara Elizabeth Dougherty Carter, who was also A. P. Carter's wife. The group performed locally at churches, schools, and social events. In 1927 the Carter Family traveled to Bristol to audition for the Victor Talking Machine Company and made several records. Invited to Victor's studios in Camden, New Jersey, for further sessions, the group eventually recorded hundreds of songs. The Carter Family's fame also derived from appearances on radio shows that could be heard across the country.

After the original Carter Family broke up in 1943, Maybelle Carter and her three daughters, Anita, Helen, and Valerie June, began performing on

numerous radio stations, including Richmond's WRVA. By 1950 she had joined Nashville's Grand Ole Opry radio show. She became known as "Mother Maybelle" and later as the Mother of Country Music.

Carter mastered several guitar styles including Hawaiian slide guitar, but she is most famous for the "Carter scratch" or "Carter lick," a dynamic thumb-lead style that powered most of the Carter Family's recordings. During the folk music revival of the 1960s Carter often performed on the autoharp and reprised many of the Carter Family's classic tunes, such as "Wildwood Flower." Youthful folk music audiences embraced her and her music, and she appeared on the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's classic *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* album. In 1970 the Carter Family was the first group inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

## 6 CAMILLA ELLA WILLIAMS (1919– ), DANVILLE, SINGER

**Camilla Ella Williams (born October 18, 1919)** graduated from Virginia State College in 1941 with a degree in music and, after teaching third grade in Danville for a year, moved to Philadelphia to study voice. With Geraldine Farrar, a world-renowned soprano, as her mentor, Williams became the first African American contract singer with the New York City Opera. She received critical acclaim for her debut on May 15, 1946, singing the title role in Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, and won the Page One Award, given by the New York Newspaper Guild for outstanding performance. In April 1954 Williams became the first black artist to sing a major role with the Vienna State Opera. She was also an accomplished recitalist and a respected interpreter of lieder, art songs arranged for solo singer and piano accompanist. She sang the role of Bess in the first full-length recording of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, made by Columbia Records in 1951.

Williams visited Africa, the Far East, and Israel as a cultural ambassador for the U.S. State Department. In 1963 she performed in Danville to raise funds to free jailed civil rights demonstrators. She sang at the 1963 March on Washington, D.C., and for Martin Luther King Jr. when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

Williams retired from opera in 1970 and began teaching voice at Bronx College, Brooklyn College, and Queens College, all in New York City. In 1977 she became the first African American professor of voice at Indiana University. Williams was one of thirty-five Virginians honored by the governor in 1972 for outstanding national achievement in the arts and humanities. In 1979 the City of Danville dedicated Camilla Williams Park. She retired from teaching in 1997 and lives in Bloomington, Indiana.

## 7 MARY ALICE FRANKLIN HATWOOD FUTRELL (1940– ), LYNCHBURG, EDUCATOR

A native of Altavista, **Mary Alice Franklin Hatwood Futrell (born May 24, 1940)** graduated from Dunbar High School, in Lynchburg, and in 1962 received a degree in business education from Virginia State College. She taught for two years at Parker-Gray High School, in Alexandria, and was one of the teachers who desegregated the previously all-white faculty of the city's George Washington High School in 1965. While teaching in Alexandria, she earned a master's degree in education from George Washington University in 1968.

Futrell was president of the Virginia Education Association from 1976 to 1978 and secretary-treasurer of the National Education Association in 1983, when she became the first African American elected president of the 1.9-million-member association. She served until 1989, the longest tenure of any president to that time. During her presidency she focused on reducing dropout rates, expanding the Head Start program and the use of computers in teaching, and providing child-care programs. The NEA later created an award

named for her to honor educators who make exemplary contributions to women's rights and education.

In 1992 Futrell joined the faculty of George Washington University. She completed her doctorate and in 1995 became dean of the Graduate School of Education and Human Development. She has written and spoken widely on issues relating to education. Long recognized as one of the nation's most distinguished educators, she is also a lifelong advocate for women. In 1976 she became president of ERAmerica, a national organization that lobbied unsuccessfully for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. In 1984 Futrell summarized her commitment to education by stating, "History has long demonstrated that education is the foundation, the key to the achievement of equity and excellence in our society."

Futrell was nominated by Tracey Jones Saxon of Jack Jouett Middle School in Charlottesville.

## 8 SHEILA CRUMP JOHNSON (1949– ), LOUDOUN COUNTY, ENTREPRENEUR AND PHILANTHROPIST

An innovative media executive and entrepreneur, **Sheila Crump Johnson (born 1949)** grew up in Maywood, Illinois. After receiving a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Illinois, she taught music and perfected her skill on the violin. As a cultural liaison to the Middle East for the U.S. Information Agency, she helped establish the National Music Conservatory of Jordan.

In 1980 Johnson cofounded Black Entertainment Television, the first station focused on the needs, interests, and culture of African Americans. In addition to initiating successful programming for adult audiences, she created *Teen Summit*, a weekly show that allowed teenagers to talk candidly about important issues in their lives. Since selling her interest in BET in 2000, Johnson has focused on numerous real estate and business opportunities near Salamander Farm, her 200-acre property in Middleburg. She is president of the Washington

Mystics, a Women's National Basketball Association team, and also owns minority shares of the Washington Capitals and the Washington Wizards. She is a photographer and has designed a line of luxury linens.

Johnson has become one of the nation's most notable philanthropists, particularly in education and the arts. She has made major gifts to the United Negro College Fund, the Hill School in Middleburg, Howard University, the Levine School of Music, and the Parsons School of Design. In 2002 her generous contributions established the Sheila Crump Johnson Institute at the State University of New York at Morrisville, which supports diversity and character building for students and the college community. Johnson's leadership and her commitment to sharing the fruits of her success with others have brought her many honors, including recognition in 2006 by the *Dallas Morning News* as one of the nation's most distinguished women leaders.

# virginia women<sup>in</sup> HISTORY 2007



Women have been an integral part of life in Virginia since the earliest days of recorded history, yet their contributions have often been overlooked in the history books. Until well into the twentieth century, women could not serve in the military, vote, or hold public office, and written histories tended to focus on the deeds of great warriors and famous statesmen, ignoring women's roles as wives, mothers, teachers, nurses, farmers, artists, pioneers, laborers, and community builders.

Today, we recognize and celebrate women's accomplishments in all walks of life, particularly in March each year, which has been

designated by Congress as National Women's History Month. The Library of Virginia, in partnership with the Virginia Foundation for Women, presents the 2007 Virginia Women in History poster to honor eight women—past and present—who have made important contributions to Virginia and America. We encourage you to learn more about these fascinating women who saw things differently from their contemporaries, developed new approaches to old problems, strove for excellence based on the courage of their convictions, and initiated changes in Virginia and America that continue to have an impact on our lives today.



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